

Abernathy offers a more human view of King, Jr.

By Joe Bustillos
Daily Titan

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Sure, Abernathy wrote about the darker side of King's private life on a total of six pages out of 620. But to make that the focus of a book review is a blatant misrepresentation of Abernathy's prose.

And The Walls Came Tumbling Down, as a whole, is hardly a controversial book. It is Abernathy's folksy autobiography with obvious attention to his memory of the civil rights movement as King's right-hand man.

Though the civil rights movement was not a one-man accomplishment, popular history seems to have focused all of its attention on King and his assassination. In most cases, it seems to have passed over the role of the second in command, the personal adviser, the man behind the scenes. Other King insiders such as Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson have garnered more media and popular attention than Abernathy. This book attempts to fill in the details from Abernathy's vantage point. The book could have easily been called "Second In Command" or

"Martin's VP."

And The Walls Came Tumbling Down is filled with the language of destiny. Living under the stern shadow of his hard-working father and religious mother, Abernathy was something of a favored son. His grandmother, who performed his delivery, told his mother at the time, "I've brought many of your children into the world. In fact, this is the 10th one. But he's different, strange. I

predict that he will be known throughout the world." One gets the impression, as the story unfolds, that the success and prominence of the civil rights movement owes as much to Abernathy's destiny as to King's charisma.

Surrounded by the affection and support of his Southern rural family, Abernathy was shielded in his early life from the cruelties of segregation and hostile racism. There is something ironic in the thought that one of the men who led the fight against Jim Crow laws had never dealt with them until he joined the military toward the end

of World War II. But this delayed encounter with his lifelong nemesis no doubt contributed to his belief in fighting against the practice of racial segregation. But he was not ready to step into that arena until he developed his intense friendship with the man that the media would make into an icon of the movement, Martin Luther King Jr..

The major balance of the book is about Abernathy's friendship with King. Rather than being the "kiss-and-tell" expose that Newsweek would lead its readership to believe, Abernathy goes to great lengths to express his support and affection for King. The observant reader of the book will quickly notice how Abernathy willingly took second place behind his friend. Each man seemed well-aware of their need for each other and how their respective personalities fit the roles that they played in the civil rights movement.

From the time King and Abernathy organized the Montgomery Improvement Association until King's assassination in Memphis, the two men were inseparable. Abernathy writes of his friend: "Some public figures reveal themselves completely in their media appearances while others, for whatever reason, withhold a significant portion of themselves. ... Martin Luther King Jr. was not a



why deal with the Newsweek review?
what about those who haven't seen it?

nicely written

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76 LINES

no

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Abernathy himself comes off as a quiet, unassuming gentleman who took up a cause that was consistent with his rural religious upbringing and found a soul-mate in King.

If the book has a negative side it is that at 620 pages it doesn't really qualify as leisurely reading. It suffers from the stifling procession of details common to historical narratives. Obviously Abernathy and his editors felt that the details were important enough to the story to risk reducing the book's pace to a snail's crawl at times. That being the case, it's somewhat understandable that the media would concentrate on the one controversial element of the book.

Abernathy's decision to write about King's sexual indiscretions, while hotly condemned by other King insiders, was motivated by his desire to write about the person behind the television image and not the media icon. One can only hope that the reading public will have the intelligence and sense of reality to accept that men and woman, with all their imperfections and moral flaws, can accomplish great things.

whose fault is this?

ive dont know

Yesterday —
we use the
day of the
week

52

>u22<By Karen Henson and Joe Bustillos>u23<Twenty years ago, the question was raised. "How long will prejudice blind the vision of men?" Then the voice was silenced.ql

(m)The Coalition Against Apartheid (CAA) played the film "King: Montgomery to Memphis" yesterday in an effort to remember America's role in civil rights. Colin Caldwell, president of CAA, said ~~that~~ it's easy to point fingers at human rights violations around the world and not remember ^{what happened in} our own backyard.ql Really in the BACK YARD?

(m)The film ~~that was shown in the~~ ^{So} chronicled the civil rights movement from the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death in 1968. Caldwell said ~~that~~ it's easy to distance ourselves from human rights violations with statistics. However, the film's depiction of firehoses and german shepherds used to disperse the civil rights demonstrators made it personal, according to Caldwell.ql

(m)Biology major Wendy Loeffler said ~~that~~ it was hard to watch ^{which DEMONSTRATORS? where? when?} the abuse the demonstrators encountered.ql

(m)CAA member Curt Faulkner admired the courage of the civil rights activists, willingness to face death for their cause.ql

(m)Caldwell said that given the growing racial violence, such as ^{WHO is YUSEF HAWKINS? WHO killed him? when?} the murder of Yusef Hawkins in New York, ~~that~~ conditions in

America show a potential of becoming like South Africa.ql

(m)Yet, the four conditions that King and the civil rights movement fought for have not been accomplished in South Africa.ql

(m)These criteria were the desegregation of all stores, to have equal opportunity in employment, drop the charges placed against non-violent demonstrators and a creation of a biracial

who is
"we?"

Just rights?

You need to know
the difference between
A RURAL AND A
POSSIBLE.

committee that would establish a timetable to ensure the solving of additional inequalities.ql

(m) In addition, the film showed the strength of the movement with an ~~airial~~ ^{aerial} view of the crowd that encompassed the entire Washington Monument in anticipation of King's address.ql

(m) King spoke of the Emancipation Proclamation^{SO} which ended the long nights of captivity for blacks. Yet, 100 years later, black's are still not free.ql

(m) This freedom still has not been reached for blacks in South Africa. In addition, many violations of human rights are on an upward swing in America.ql

(m) The passage of a law in Irvine on Nov. 7 legalizing the right to discriminate against homosexuals is an example of the erosion of basic freedoms.ql

(m) Yet, as King said "somewhere I read of freedom of assembly, somewhere I read of a right to protest for basic freedoms."

However, in America and South Africa blacks and other minorities are in a daily struggle for freedom.ql

(m) ~~Towards the end of the film~~ King's last speech was played at his funeral. He spoke about what he wanted someone to say about him after his death.ql

(m) "Don't mention all the awards I have received ... I want to be remembered as a man that tried to love somebody." King said.ql

(m) ~~Appropriately~~, the film ended with a song that said what will happen now that the king of love is dead.ql

(m)

What will
happen?

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